

Sūrah 81

Al-Takwīr

(The Folding Up)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The *Sūrah*'s title is derived from the word *kuwwirat*, the past participle form, which occurs in the opening verse, and literally means something "folded up". Thus, it is the *Sūrah* that speaks of the phenomenon of the folding up of the objects of the universe.

Period of Revelation

It emerges from its subject matter and themes that this *Sūrah* must have been revealed in the early days of the Makkan period.

Subject Matter and Themes

The Hereafter and Messengership are the *Sūrah*'s two main themes. Verses 1-6 spell out the scenario of the Last Day: the sun shall be folded up; the stars shall scatter away; the mountains shall be set in motion; people shall abandon even their most precious belongings; savage beasts shall be brought together and seas shall be set to boiling point. Verses 7-13 describe the next phase: when

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souls shall be restored to dead bodies; when records of deeds shall be presented; when everyone shall be called to account for his/her misdeeds, and the heavens shall be laid bare, as Hell and Paradise appear before everyone's eyes. After presenting this graphic account of the Last Day man is asked to reflect on his preparations for the Hereafter.

The issue of Messengership is taken up in the latter part of the *Sūrah*. The Makkans are told that the Prophet's message is not the raving of some mad person. Nor is it the handiwork of the devil. On the contrary, this message is from the Supreme, Most Exalted Lord. The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw the message bearer on the clear horizon, in daylight. They are asked as to whither they turn away, rejecting the divine message.